

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ARCHITECTURE. (Extracted from the "Artisan.")

It further appears, we think, to be the result of our inquiries, that the Gothic is not the style of architecture naturally best calculated for religious edifices. It is hallowed, it is true, in our imaginations, by solemn associations, and in most minds familiar with its applications, we believe, will be productive of solemn impressions. But this effect is merely an accidental one, and is much akin to the gloom a white colour produces on the minds of the Chinese, among whom it is used as a sign of mourning. The natural effect, we think, of the minute, fragile, and elegant components of the more florid Gothic, is to move the imagination to gaiety; and, indeed, such a structure as Henry the Seventh's Chapel, with its flying buttress and airy frost-work, appears to us much fitter for a theatre than a church. The emotions which church architecture should naturally inspire,—if it should inspire any,—are those of veneration, homility, and awe; and no species of architecture will so certainly inspire these emotions as that which deals in stupendous representations of living beings. This the ancient Egyptians well understood; and we can scarcely conceive any thing better calculated than the architecture of some of their temples for quelling the spirit of the worshipper, and banishing the arrogance and pride of heart which stand in the way of devotional feeling. Among their avenues of sphinxes, and halls supported by images of human beings a hundred feet high, the spectator collapsed to the dimensions of an insect, and acquired a lesson more powerful than a thousand homilies, of his own frailty and insignificance. We do not for a moment pretend that there is not much in the Egyptian architecture that naturally excites rather ridicule and disgust than solemnity and veneration. The anatomical perfection of the different representations of living objects for example,—the grotesque hieroglyphics, and many other peculiarities, are all far from pleasing; and we are perfectly confident that any attempt to revive the true Egyptian architecture in the present day would not succeed. But we think the employment of similar instruments of emotion, without any more regard to those details which more particularly give the Egyptian complexion than if they had never existed, could not fail, under judicious treatment, to be eminently popular and successful. It would of course be applicable only to particular kinds of edifices—chiefly churches—and should neither imitate ancient peculiarities, nor neglect any of the aids afforded by the skill and science of the present time. The sculptures should be as true representations of natural objects as the present state of skill can produce, and those objects should be such as are agreeable in themselves, and as, at the same time, are possessed of sensation. To give an example of this architecture—a dome, twice the size of St. Paul's, supported by human figures as tall as the Monument—that would be one variety; and the most sluggish imagination may conceive something of the sublimity of such a structure, and how pale and puny even our most boasted edifices would become in the comparison. The expense, indeed, of such an architecture, is an obvious objection; but with the means of facilitating productions the useful arts now afford, in the case of objects which are merely repetitions of one another, the expense might be made so moderate as to deprive this objection of most of its weight. We must observe, too, that we do not participate in the antipathies of some architects relative to artificial stone, and other elements of a more perishable variety of construction; and, indeed, with the exception of a few particular cases, we think it a reckless extravagance to rear buildings calculated to last till the final conflagration, and which, ten to one, will be burned or demolished in the lapses of a few centuries. A more perishable species of building would be better both for architecture and architects. It would make the introduction of improvements a work of less hesitation, at the same time that it would afford a greater number of opportunities for their introduction; and the saving in the first cost might, at compound interest, generally suffice to reproduce the building in a comparatively short period. Upon this subject, however, we are unable at present to enlarge, and must content

ourselves with observing, that taking into account the aids afforded by modern art to architectural progress, it seems practicable to invent a number of architectural orders which, without being mere, if at all, more expensive than those now in use, will be either much more sublime, much more magnificent, or much more elegant and airy. Of these varieties of architectural embellishment, we shall be presumptuous enough, on an early occasion, to furnish some examples, provided that these rude and general hints have not intermediately had the effect of awakening to the work of invention some of those more accomplished practitioners whose more active fancy and more sufficient powers of execution may enable them to achieve such combinations as would both meet with greater attention and more eminently deserve it.

These, then, are some of the consequences which flow from that train of investigation in which we have so long detained our readers, and which we distinguish by the name of the Philosophy of Architecture. To some persons we are prepared to expect it will appear a mere waste-heap of metaphysical refinements; but the larger proportion will probably agree with us in thinking that it constitutes the essence of architectural knowledge, and lies at the root of architectural proficiency. While freeing the fancy from those restraints imposed by a tyrant precedent, it defines clearly the limits within which its flights must be restrained, where the aim is not to please ourselves, but to please human nature; and stands equally opposed to the inapidity of classical sublimations and the vulgarity of a gaudy magnificence. By overturning the notion that art can be empirical, it gives, we think, a most powerful impulse to architectural progress, while the relation it establishes with human sympathies gives a new complexion to architectural art such as cannot fail, we think, to inflame the imaginations and quicken the sensibilities of the less apathetic of its votaries. This, however, it may be contended, though a very important task, ought to have devolved upon other hands, being foreign to the professed objects of a work devoted to the operative arts. To the first point of this objection we have only to reply, that the hands which would have executed the task better appear to have been unwilling to undertake it; and, to the second, that it appears to us founded on a mistaken estimate of the position really due to those arts known by the name of operative, as well as to a fallacious conception of the intellectual stature of the persons habitually employed on them. It is with the artisans that art has ever originated: it was born in the workshops of Athens, and resuscitated in the workshops of Italy; and if it be destined to experience another renovation, it will be in the workshop, we are confident, where the revival will take place. Finally, we may observe, the philosophy of architecture displays the true value of that species of architecture criticism which praises and blames empirically—which erects the personal associations of the critic into the dignity of natural laws, and which reveals, in the acerbity and intolerance of its decisions, the outpourings of a frozen heart and mortified vanity. All men have some peculiar associations, and, therefore, some peculiar ideas of beauty; and these they have every right to maintain so long as they do not attempt to force them on the acceptance of others. But those who work for universal admiration must be careful to deal with those objects only which address themselves to universal associations, and which are the perpetual concomitants in all minds of deep and agreeable emotion.

COLCHESTER.—NEW TOWN HALL.—Nearly all the subscriptions for this long-looked-for and desirable improvement to the town have been paid in, and a considerable number of fresh subscribers are added to the list. We understand that no time will be lost in making arrangements for the speedy removal of the present old and unsightly edifice (the Moot Hall), and disposing of the materials to the best advantage; so that there is some prospect of the foundation of the new building being laid before Midsummer.

THE COLLEGE OF NOBLES in Lisbon, used as a polytechnic school, but originally founded by the Jesuits, was totally destroyed by fire on the 22nd ult.; it is to be rebuilt on a modest but sufficient scale. The books and valuable philosophical instruments were saved.

WHAT IS LUXURY?—A candle would have been a luxury to Alfred; a half-crown cotton gown to his Queen. Carpets, in lieu of rushes, would have been luxuries to Henry VII.; glass windows, in lieu of horn, to his nobles. A lettuce to Henry VIII.'s Queen; silk gloves and stockings to Queen Elizabeth; and so on, *ad infinitum*. Mr. Charles Waterton, the author of some works on natural history, in an account of his family, tells us that one of his ancestors, in the time of Henry IV., was sent into France by the King, with orders to contract a royal marriage, and was allowed thirteen shillings a day for his trouble and travelling expenses.

If by an operation of mechanism animated nature could be copied with the accuracy of a cast in plaster, a tracing on a wall, or a reflection in a glass, without modification and without the proprieties and graces of art, all that utility could desire would be perfectly attained; but it would be at the expense of almost every quality which renders art delightful. Art is only art when it adds mind to form: whatever is high or happy in thought, or skilful and gracefully natural in touch,—whatever speaks to the feelings, or appeals to the judgment, will, if seen in the most distant corner of the earth, or in the remotest period of time, be as truly felt, and as rightly judged, as in the day and hour when it first passed from our hands. But this most ennobling of all studies, this most ennobling of all pursuits, must be followed by a pure heart and a disinterested mind. Should any follower of the arts be disappointed because study is not followed by success, and success by wealth and high fortune, then he expects more than he ought, and deserves mortification, such as ambition of an impure nature merits: indeed, if the glories of art are not sought for their own sake, they had better not be sought at all. If gain only were its glory, it should be a forbidden study, and prohibited, from the very prostitution of soul which in such minds it occasions. True art is, however, too pure and too high a matter to be so misused, and is in no danger of dishonour or neglect in an age of civilisation. * * * We have private patronage in this land to an extent which no other nation possesses. Let us encourage this market by supplying it with excellence rather than choking it with abundance: husband it in every way; let not its importance be underrated. To this class of patrons we owe the chief works of art in our land. The whole range of landscape-painting, scenes of familiar life, all our portraiture, and a great proportion of our historical works, are the offspring of individual encouragement. The palaces of Rome, of Florence, of Bologna, and of Venice were filled with works from the like source. It was by this, and this alone, that the great families of the Doria, the Colonna, and the Altieri acquired their magnificent specimens of Claude Lorrain and of the Poussins: it was by this that the Farnese, the Farnesina, the Rossignoli, and the Ludovisi were decorated; by this the family of Orleans became possessed of the Sacramenta of Poussin; and by this has the burgomaster Six been handed down to our day as the friend and benefactor of Rembrandt. All who desire to distinguish themselves and grow into eminence in art; all who begin to plume, as it were, their wings for an untried flight in the higher or the humbler regions of art, must hope for success through patronage such as this,—a patronage which surpasses far that of many foreign governments, and has been established here both by patriotism and generosity. To this source all that the genius of our school has produced must stand indebted for origin and support. This is a feature in our art, as well as a proof of the increasing taste and growing wealth of the empire. Activity of mind in the artist, a variety and diversity of subject, an originality of style, splendour in colour, a happy adaptation of the theme to the feeling of every variety of being: an observance of these ruling points has enabled English art to penetrate and become an object of demand in every country in the world. Instead, therefore, of damping the ardour of young enthusiasm by holding out unreasonable fears, or expatiating on the manifold causes of depression which genius, through its sensibilities, seems doomed to suffer, I would rather conclude with relating a story which came to me through the historian of one of the English settlements of America. A devout community of respectable settlers, too weak to protect themselves, and too humble to purchase the protection of others, held in their misery a day of fast and humiliation, to render themselves worthy of the favour of Providence: but their distresses still continued, and they again consulted about the propriety of another fast, as an atonement for their sins. "A fast!" exclaimed one who had not hitherto spoken; "a fast would be ungrateful to God for the many mercies he has shown us; let us rather appoint a day of thanksgiving;" the proposal was carried with shouts, and the little colony was prosperous ever after.—From *Sir David Wilkie's Life*.